

tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio) at 4 p.m.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill, H.R. 1229.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

PUTTING THE GULF OF MEXICO BACK TO WORK ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 245 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1229.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1229) to amend the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to facilitate the safe and timely production of American energy resources from the Gulf of Mexico, with Mr. WOMACK in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. LAMBORN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, families and businesses across the country are struggling with skyrocketing gasoline prices that in many places have already passed \$4 per gallon. Everyday activities, such as commuting to work or taking the kids to soccer practice, have strained family budgets, forcing Americans to make tough choices and sacrifices. Unfortunately, rising gasoline prices are not the only energy crisis currently hurting our country. For over a year, communities along the Gulf of Mexico have suffered through a real and then de facto moratorium on offshore drilling imposed by the Obama administration. The administration's intentional slow-walking of drilling permits has cost 12,000 jobs according to their own estimates. According to economist Dr. Joseph Mason, this could cost over 36,000 jobs nationwide if businesses and their employees are not allowed to return to work soon. Over the past month, the Natural Resources Committee has heard from numerous small businesses in Louisiana that have had to lay off hundreds of people, eliminate benefits and diminish their savings just to try to stay afloat.

The bill being considered by the House today will help address all of these concerns. It will put the people and businesses along the gulf back to work by requiring the administration to act on new drilling permits in a timely manner. For Americans across the country who are suffering from rising gasoline prices, this bill acts now to expand American production to help lower costs. H.R. 1229, the Putting the Gulf Back to Work Act, sets a firm time line for the Secretary of the Interior to act on permits. Let me be very clear. Action does not necessarily mean approval. Action simply means that the Secretary must make a decision either to approve or to deny a permit. The bill gives the Secretary 30 days to act, along with two 15-day extensions. This 30-day time frame is consistent with the time line for approving exploration plans, which are far more complicated. A deadline is necessary in order to stop the endless bureaucratic delays and inaction that are currently taking place and to provide companies with some certainty.

There are over 50 permitted projects in the Gulf of Mexico that were under way when the Obama administration imposed the moratorium in May 2010. Nearly a year later, over 40 of those same 50 projects have yet to resume work. This bill would give the Secretary 30 days to restart these projects that have already been approved.

I want to stress that H.R. 1229 will have an immediate impact on jobs and energy production. Each drilling platform supports 800 to 1,400 jobs. Each permit that is issued translates into several hundred people returning to work. In addition, there are production wells just waiting for permits to resume work, meaning that more American energy could come online within months of a permit being issued. Perhaps most importantly, H.R. 1229 also makes significant safety improvements. U.S. offshore drilling helps create American energy and American jobs, but it must be done in a safe and responsible manner.

The bill reforms current law by requiring a drilling company to obtain a permit to drill from the Secretary. Currently, such a permit is not required by law, only by regulation. The bill further reforms the law by requiring the Secretary to conduct a safety review. The bill ensures that all proposed drilling operations must, quote, meet all critical safety system requirements, including blowout prevention, and oil spill response and containment requirements.

Finally, this bill establishes an expedited judicial review process for resolving lawsuits relating to gulf permits. This reform ensures that ending the de facto moratorium imposed by the Obama administration isn't replaced by paralyzing and frivolous lawsuits that could take years to resolve.

What we will see today during the course of this debate are two very different approaches to America's energy

future. Republicans are pursuing an all-of-the-above energy approach to American energy production to create jobs, generate revenue, lower gasoline prices, and strengthen our national security. The Obama administration and congressional Democrats, on the other hand, want to make energy more expensive. Their agenda is to raise taxes to make energy production more difficult and costly. We saw proof of this last Congress when they did everything they could to push through the job-destroying Waxman-Markey national energy tax. Now they are trying to increase taxes on American energy producers.

While Americans are looking for solutions to lower gasoline prices, the Democrats' proposals would increase prices even higher. How in the world higher prices and taxes on energy would help Americans at the gas pump is beyond me.

It's time for Congress to take steps to end the economic pain in the gulf by allowing people to return to work. It's time to ease the pain of high gasoline prices by expanding American energy production. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation to create jobs, to lower prices, including the price of gas at the pump, and to strengthen our national security.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1229. Need I remind the Members of this body that 1 year and 19 days ago, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, killing 11 workers and creating economic and environmental havoc. For 87 days following the explosion, more than 4 million barrels of oil spewed from the blown-out Macondo well, coating nearly 1,000 miles of gulf coastline and temporarily closing over 88 square miles of some of the Nation's most productive fishing grounds. Yet this Congress has not enacted a single legislative reform to improve the safety of offshore drilling. Instead, the majority now brings forward in the name of spurious claims a bill to encourage more domestic offshore drilling without applying the lessons learned from the gulf blowout. With the spurious claim that more domestic offshore drilling will lower gas prices, they claim that we have to grease the skids, we have to open the doors, we have to give further breaks to the oil companies.

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Now, sadly, it seems their motto is "Ignore the spill. Drill, baby, drill."

Frankly, the majority's trio of offshore drilling bills were written as though the Deepwater Horizon disaster had never occurred. That's why I refer to them as the "amnesia acts." Collectively, they will make offshore drilling less safe while opening up vast new swaths of our coastlines without adding any new safety requirements or environmental safeguards on the oil and gas industry.